

Michael Aristodemou

Now for the thesis award for the research master. The winner of this thesis prize stood out from the others due to the enormous task he undertook:

Getting familiar with a specific, complex type of structural equation model;

Approaching researchers to get his hands on large, prospective datasets;

Translating theoretical models into statistical models;

Running these models on the Shark computer cluster;

Running simulation studies to make sure the models are implemented correctly;

Pre-registering the analysis, including the code;

Managing a team of 6 collaborators, and

Writing the thesis itself.

The winner, Michael Aristodemou, aimed to distinguish two models that explain comorbidity of mental disorders. The first model claims that comorbidity arises from a common cause of both disorders, e.g. emotion regulation dysfunction increases proneness to both anxiety and mood disorders. Another theory suggests that there are causal relationships between symptoms, e.g. mood disorders cause anxiety disorders.

The committee was impressed by the thoroughness of his analyses, which certainly exceeded the complexity normally seen in MSc theses. Despite its complexity, the thesis was readable, and deals with an important distinction in the clinical literature. Michael seems to have grasped the literature and the theoretical framework of both models very well, which is commendable in the light of the limited time available for a thesis. Adding the complexity of the analyses, it only made sense to declare Michael the winner of this prize.

And not only the committee was impressed. A renowned researcher and proponent of the common cause model, Benjamin Lahey, came across his thesis through Google Scholar, and reached out to him to compliment him on it. Also, his thesis is currently being adapted for submission to Nature Human Behavior.

There is nothing more to say, nor is there time to say it, so congratulations Michael with the thesis award!